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ABSTRACT

The results of the May 1984 British Columbia Reading Assessment were presented in this summary report. Highlights of the survey, summary tables of important results, and conclusions and recommendations made by the Contract Team were outlined. The students in grades four, seven, and ten completed achievement surveys and attitude scales. Five domains were identified by an advisory committee of classroom teachers and subject specialists. Items were developed to assess students' competence in each area. The domains assessed were Words and Expressions; Literal Comprehension; Inferential Comprehension; Critical Comprehension; and Locates/Uses Information. The next assessment of reading is scheduled to take place in 1988. (DWH)

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Assessment Update

ED256799

DECEMBER 1984

READING RESULTS ANNOUNCED

In May, 1984, over 98,000 British Columbia students completed achievement surveys and attitude scales in the third British Columbia Reading Assessment. At each of grades 4, 7 and 10, the areas of reading examined were: Word and Expressions; Literal, Inferential and Critical Comprehension; and Locates and Uses Information.

Panels of teachers, parents and trustees rated student achievement as Very Satisfactory in ten of the fourteen domains and as Satisfactory in the four other domains.

The Very Satisfactory rating indicates that student achievement surpassed expectations for a "good" education system and approached the level judged "desirable".

Dr. Sharon Jeroski, Chairman of the Contract Team says, "Clearly, the current student population is meeting the widely held expectations for reading performance".

HIGHLIGHTS

- Students displayed relatively positive attitudes toward reading. They reported high levels of enjoyment for reading fiction and assigned high values to reading as a means of acquiring information and enhancing school achievement.
- Students at all grades displayed high levels of literal comprehension and skill in organizing factual material on open-ended questions.
- Most students could make appropriate inferences/judgements about the material they read.
- Boys reported reading and enjoying a greater variety of reading materials.
- Student achievement and attitudes differed according to home environment and amount of leisure reading.
- Gender differences favored girls in both achievement and attitude. The difference for achievement was greatest at Grade 7; for attitude at Grade 10.

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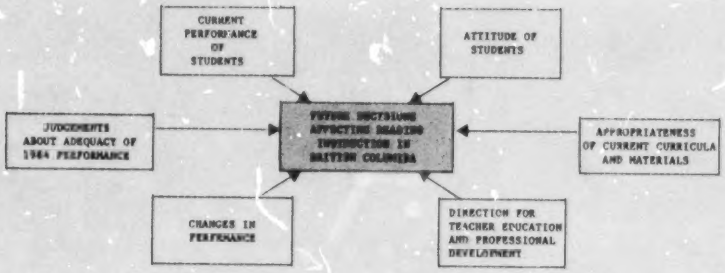
PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

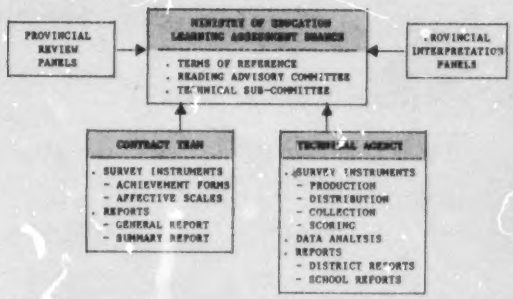
The main principle underlying province-wide assessments is that the decisions about education should be based on up-to-date information on what and how students are learning.


CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS
ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS
JUDGEMENTS ABOUT ADEQUACY OF 1984 PERFORMANCE
FUTURE DECISIONS AFFECTING READING INSTRUCTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
APPROPRIATENESS OF CURRENT CURRICULA AND MATERIALS
CHANGES IN PERFORMANCE
DIRECTION FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHO CONDUCTED THE ASSESSMENT?

The Contract Team was headed by Dr. Sharon Jeroski from Horizon Research and Associates. The Contract Team was guided by an Advisory Committee of teachers, administrators, a school trustee, and Ministry representatives. The Educational Research Institute of British Columbia was responsible for the production, distribution and scoring of all forms and the analysis of the results.

Fall review panels of reading teachers assessed the appropriateness of the the questions for the final forms. Interpretation panels met in June, 1984 to interpret the provincial results. Names of all participants can be found in the Summary Report.



WHAT SKILLS WERE TESTED?

One of the first steps in assessment is to decide what will be tested. An Advisory Committee of classroom teachers and subject specialists carefully studies the objectives of the current curricula, and decides which should be tested. In this assessment, five domains were identified and items were developed to assess students' competence.

Domain descriptions and samples of questions used are found through the Update. Space does not permit the printing of stimulus passages.

Domain 2: Literal Comprehension (sample)

This domain required students to indicate understanding of main ideas, of sequence, of relationships, and of supporting information when explicitly stated in text.

After reading a letter to parents which announces plans for a track meet, Grade 4 students were asked:
What should students do with the form after it has been signed by a parent or guardian?

%		
3	A.	Bring it to the Track Meet.
64	*B.	Bring it to the school by Wednesday, May 26.
26	C.	Return it in a sealed envelope by May 28.
3	D.	Give it to the Home-School president.
2	E.	I don't know.

* right answer

B.C. READING ASSESSMENT 1984

The 1984 Reading Assessment differed in several ways from previous assessments. Those differences included:

1. Grades tested were 4, 7 and 10; in previous assessments grades 4, 8 and 12 were used. This has limited comparisons to previous assessments.

2. School level reports listing domain scores at school, district and provincial levels have been provided to school districts.

3. The emphasis has been on testing comprehension as the ultimate goal of reading instruction rather than looking at enabling skills such as phonics or compound words.

4. Q forms, administered to 4% of the students, required students to write answers. Multiple-choice questions are the single most effective means of obtaining information in large-scale assessments. However, when it is desirable to discover student ability to respond to sustantiate, to organize or to integrate information, the open-ended format is preferable. Details of the findings from Q forms will be found in Chapter 5 of the Summary Report.

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STUDENT PERFORMANCE RATED BY INTERPRETATION PANELS

In order to make judgements about student performance, the interpretation panelists (30 at each grade level) carefully examined each item for difficulty and then decided on "acceptable" and "desirable" levels of achievement. Individuals then met in small groups and later as a grade panel to reach consensus on what levels of achievement students in that grade should attain.

*MPC - the Mean Percent Correct is the average percent of students who chose the correct response for items in a particular objective or domain.

**PR - Panel Ratings have the following meanings:

5 - Strong
4 - Very Satisfactory
3 - Satisfactory
2 - Marginally Satisfactory
1 - Weak

Because some objectives or domains provide a more difficult task, or because some items were more difficult than others, the panel ratings are not based on the score, but on the "widely held expectations" for students on those items at that grade.

	GRADE 4		GRADE 7		GRADE 10	
DOMAIN	*MPC	**PR	MPC	PR	MPC	PR
1. Words and Expressions						
Word Recognition	77.6	5	70.2	4	--	--
Context Clues	59.7	3	72.8	5	69.6	4
Multiple Meanings	77.2	5	67.3	3	61.3	2
Structural Analysis	63.2	2	--	--	--	--
Figurative Language	--	--	--	--	61.8	3
Total Domain	--	4	--	4	--	3
2. Literal Comprehension	75.2	4	78.4	4	72.7	4
3. Inferential Comprehension	70.9	4	72.8	3	70.0	4
4. Critical Comprehension	N/A		70.4	3	63.2	3
5. Locates/Uses Information						
Locates Information	72.1	4	83.1	5	71.9	3
Uses Standard Formats	84.8	5	--	--	--	--
Interprets Pictures	79.8	4	--	--	--	--
Dictionaries	--	--	73.8	3	--	--
Interprets Maps	--	--	76.3	4	--	--
Interprets Graphic Material	--	--	--	--	80.3	4
Total Domain		4		4		4

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

The 1984 assessment surveys and analyses facilitated comparisons across grades and between British Columbia and the United States.

1. CROSS-GRADE PERFORMANCE

The 1984 Reading Assessment was designed to provide performance comparisons across grades. There were 10 common items between Grades 4 and 7, and 11 common items between Grades 7 and 10. Two items were used at all three grade levels.

Results of Cross-grade Items

Number of Common Items	Mean Percent Correct Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
10	66	82	--
11	--	69	79
Item 1	32	78	92
Item 2	51	77	83

Domain 1: Understands Words and Expressions: (sample)

This domain covered word recognition, context clues, multiple meanings, figurative language, and, for comparison purposes, structural analysis. The following is one of the items used at all three grade levels.

A shout went up from the crowd as they saw the bright green and yellow livery of the palace guard.
The word livery most likely means...

	Percent of Students Grade 4	Grade 7	Grade 10
*A. special uniform.	51	77	83
B. cannons.	5	4	3
C. horses.	3	3	1
D. royal family.	14	6	2
E. I don't know.	26	10	7

* right answer

2. B.C./U.S. COMPARISON OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Some items from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1980 Reading Assessment were used in the B.C. surveys.

	Mean Percent Correct B.C. Students	U.S. Students
Grade 4 (11 items)	Mean Age 9.8	Mean Age 9.5
Comprehension	72	59
Locates/Uses Information	81	79
Grade 7 (3 items)	Mean Age 12.8	Mean Age 13.5
Comprehension	75	72
Grade 10 (3 items)	Mean Age 15.8	Mean Age 17.5
Locates/Uses Information	74	78

B.C. students enjoy a slight advantage over their American counterparts.

Domain 5: Locates and Uses Information

This domain dealt with locating and using information which appears in non-literary formats. At Grade 4, items included a glossary, a menu, a newspaper index, a table of contents and a library card and pictures related to Social Studies. At Grade 7, material included a table of contents, dictionary, and maps. At Grade 10, a table of contents, graphs, and charts were used to test this domain. Due to the diversity of formats used, a sample has not been included.

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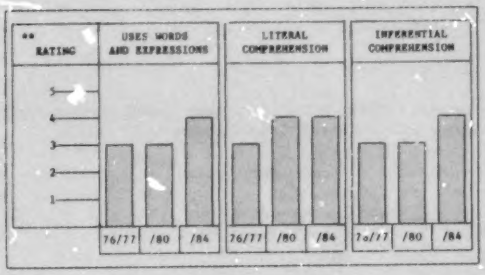
HOW DID INTERPRETATION PANELS RATINGS FOR 1976/77, 1980 AND 1984* COMPARE?

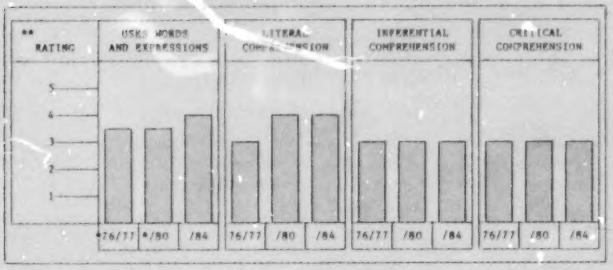
The comparison of student achievement from one assessment to another is always of interest. In the comprehension domains, the basis for comparison is extremely weak due to variations on item difficulty and grade level.

It is important to keep in mind that domain definitions, although similar, are not identical across assessments. The final domain, locates and uses information, is not included because of the divergence in stimulus materials. However, it is possible to compare the ratings of Interpretation Panels on the other domains at all three grades levels.

GRADE 4

In the 1984 Reading Assessment the Interpretation Panel judged overall Grade 4 results to be Very Satisfactory, indicating a strong primary reading program. The higher ratings achieved were based on improved performance. Panelists suggested that further improvement could be attained through emphasis on higher levels of comprehension, through increased diversity of materials and through increased integration of reading with other language arts and content areas.



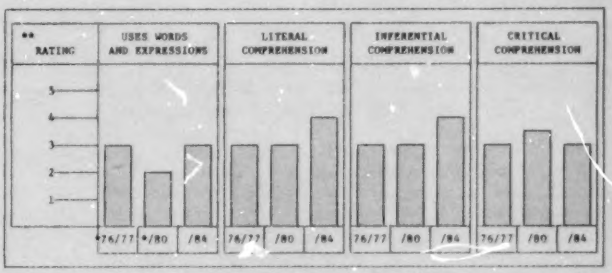


GRADE 7

The Grade 7 Interpretation Panel judged that the results indicated a relatively successful basic reading program. Where common items were used, 1984 Grade 7 performance levels were similar to 1980 Grade 8 levels. There is some indication that the 1984 grade 7 panel expected higher performance levels than had the grade 8 panel in 1980.

GRADE 10

Comparison of 1984 Grade 10 Interpretation Panel ratings to those Grade 12 in 1977 and 1980 are generally not informative. Ratings show greater satisfaction with current grade 10 performance than was indicated for the 1980 Grade 12 performance.



* 1976/77 and 1980 ratings were based on grades 4, 8 and 12; 1984 ratings on grades 4, 7, and 10.
** 5 = Strong; 4 = Very Satisfactory; 3 = Satisfactory; 2 = Marginally Satisfactory; 1 = Weak.

Domain 3: Inferential Comprehension: (sample)

This domain required students to make generalizations, infer relationships or main ideas, or to draw conclusions.

After reading an essay by Paul St. Pierre, Grade 10 students were asked:
Why do some people believe that it is cruel to allow wild horse bands to develop?

%		
20	A.	Wild horses breed down domestic stock.
9	B.	Wild horses are often hunted and shot.
7	C.	Wild horses may be trapped and butchered for fox feed.
60	*D.	Wild horses will eventually starve.
3	E.	I don't know.

* right answer

Domain 4: Critical Comprehension: (sample)

Requires students to recognize the authors purpose, to evaluate conclusions, and to distinguish between fact and opinion.

After reading an historical account of child labor, Grade 7 students were asked:
Which one of the following statements is an opinion about child labor?

%		
10	A.	Children worked in hot, sweaty places.
8	B.	Children were often beaten.
9	C.	Children worked six days a week.
70	*D.	Child labor should be against the law.
3	E.	I don't know.

* right answer

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CONTRACT TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon reviewing the student performance on the open-ended and fixed response forms, the Contract Team recommended that:

- Teachers at all grade levels focus attention on inferential and critical reading skills and that students be required both to make inferences/judgements and to substantiate them; and

- Teachers systematically instruct students in appropriate skills and strategies for dealing with both open-ended and fixed response questions.

To maintain B.C. students, very positive attitudes to reading, the Contract Team recommended that:

- Local school districts, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, ensure that a range of recreational reading material reflecting student interest and ability, as well as the range of content areas, is available to every B.C. student;

- Further, that teachers of all subject areas, working with librarians or other resource people, systematically draw student attention to publications--particularly recent releases--which fall within that domain content;

- Secondary school teachers, librarians, and administrators examine patterns of library use, and develop strategies to enhance library use among secondary school students, many of whom were avid library users in elementary school;

- English/Language Arts teachers maintain an awareness of current popular fiction, non-fiction, and periodicals in order to encourage and to facilitate classroom discussion about student recreational reading;

- Local districts and schools examine intermediate and junior secondary language arts courses to ensure that a variety of literary genres--including poetry--are presented, and read, in every classroom.

After comparing the background data with the outcome variables, the Contract Team recommended that:

- Teachers of all subject areas direct special efforts toward fostering positive attitudes and increased reading among boys in the intermediate and secondary grades. The diversity of reading interests among these students must be recognized, the traditional emphasis on the novel as the basic recreational reading genre may be inappropriate for many of these students who display strong interest in nonfiction and periodicals;

- Teacher training institutions ensure that preservice methodology courses in <u>all</u> subject areas include specific instruction related to the recognition of reading problems, the selection of appropriate materials, the development of subject-specific reading skills, and the establishment/extension of supplemental reading materials; and

- Local districts direct continued attention and resources toward those students who must overcome language, socio-cultural or other special problems in order to develop reading competence.

The 1984 Reading Assessment is the first to provide school-level results. In view of the relevance to classroom teachers, the Contract Team recommended that:

- School-level results be used to identify exemplary reading programs, and that these be analyzed to identify salient characteristics;

- School-level results be interpreted with reference to known characteristics of the relevant student population, and the relationships between background characteristics and student outcomes which have been described in this report;

- The Ministry provide guidelines for future district or school use of the 1984 achievement surveys; and

- Teachers and district personnel be systematically directed to those sections of the <u>General Report</u> which have relevance to their current responsibilities. Districts may be well-advised to reproduce and circulate selected sections of the <u>General Report</u> to appropriate groups of classroom teachers.

In the process of completing this assessment, concerns have arisen regarding the organization of current curricula to recognize the pervasive nature of reading. In light of those concerns, it was recommended that:

- The Ministry of Education review the elementary language arts guide, to ensure that the concept of integration is operationally defined; the nature of student reading experiences is made explicit; and the language arts objectives specified in Social Studies and Science curriculum guides are addressed;

- The Ministry review and revise the scope-and-sequence chart for Secondary English in light of expectations faced by current students across all curriculum areas. Further, if students are to be systematically streamed into alternate English courses in Senior Secondary grades, entry level competencies required for various Grade 11 courses be made explicit; and

- The Ministry provide resources designed to assist Language Arts and content area teachers in diagnosing student needs and assessing student competence in reading both literary and content areas materials.

Regarding the assessment of student competence in reading, it is recommended that:

- Reading assessments continue to focus on outcomes--as opposed to enabling skills--through the selection of realistic materials and tasks;

- The Ministry re-iterate the assessment program schedule and purposes to facilitate planning and effective use of results by districts and schools;

- The use of "I don't know" as an option on reading surveys be reconsidered in view of the absence of "content" and the desirability of using deductive strategies to obtain meaning;

- Response formats be varied according to the objectives of primary interest; where these include organization, synthesis, or evaluation of materials, some provision for extended or open-ended responses is required; and

- Future reading assessments maintain a strong focus on student reading attitudes and behaviors to enable examination of program effects. This information is of particular value to schools which are making sustained efforts to promote positive attitudes and enhance recreational reading.

To those responsible for designing, managing, and executing applied research involving language skills it is recommended that:

- Research attention be directed to the development of student beliefs and perceptions about the value of reading;

- Research attention be further directed to interactions between stimulus material, and student comprehension; and

- Data from this assessment be further analyzed to simultaneously examine the effects of student, school, and district characteristics on student achievement and affective outcomes.

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OTHER FINDINGS

Among school related materials, students at all grades displayed the most positive attitudes toward those associated with English/Language Arts; the least positive toward content area textbooks. The one exception occurred at Grade 7, where students rated poetry below all other materials. An unexpectedly high number of students reported that they do not read poetry in school: 8% at Grade 4, 17% at Grade 7, and 11% at Grade 10.

Few students report not reading novels, readers/short stories, or science texts in school. The use of social studies texts increases dramatically with grade level.

Results indicate strong associations among achievement, attitude, home environment and involvement in leisure reading. The strength of these associations increased with grade level. Language background is associated with achievement, but not with attitude.

The open-ended forms provide confirmation of the findings that students at all grade levels demonstrate relatively high levels of literal comprehension, and of skill in organizing factual material. Levels of inferential comprehension are generally satisfactory; however, many students are unable to substantiate their inferences. Levels of critical comprehension are of some concern, particularly at Grade 10 where few students demonstrated systematic strategies for evaluating materials.

Grade 10 students who plan to attend university demonstrated relatively high levels of achievement and positive attitudes. On the other hand, those who plan to enter the workforce directly obtained substantially lower achievement scores, and demonstrated much less positive attitudes toward reading than did the other students.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Provincial Level

Representatives of the Learning Assessment Branch will meet with other branches to inform them of the data collected and of the recommendations directed at the Ministry of Education. Information meetings with the Education Faculties of the three universities are also planned.

The next assessment of Reading is scheduled to take place in 1988.

District Level

The Learning Assessment Branch has provided each district with reports showing district and provincial results at each grade level. Each district is encouraged to discuss district performance in light of these findings and to make recommendations to the Board of School Trustees.

School reports giving domain level results have been prepared for every school in the province that was involved in the assessment. Interpretation of the school level results is to be done under the direction of the superintendent or his designate.

The assessment was conducted by a team under contract to the Learning Assessment Branch. Members of the Contract Team were:

S. Jeroski (Chairman), Horizon Research and Evaluation Affiliates
G. Labercane, University of Calgary
C. Tolsma, Vancouver Community College
K. McKinnon, Chilliwack School District
M. Quigley, Richmond School District

Members of the Advisory Committee were:

A. Toutant (Chairman), Learning Assessment Branch
K. Knowles (Chairman), Learning Assessment Branch
G. Aebig, Cariboo-Chilcotin School District
D. Bateson, Learning Assessment Branch
J. Cleugh, Curriculum Development Branch
A. Cresswell, Simon Fraser University
A. Hagen, Trustee, New Westminster School District
F. Kirkham, Coquitlam School District
E. Kwasnicki, Queen Charlotte School District
M. Lesnik, Arrow Lakes School District
W. MacGinitie, University of Victoria
J. Matheson, Learning Assessment Branch
V. McClelland, Richmond School District
C. Rutherford, Campbell River School District

The Summary Report of the 1984 Reading Assessment presents highlights of the survey, summary tables of important results, and conclusions and recommendations made by the Contract Team. This report was distributed to school district offices in sufficient quantities for one copy per school, to university and colleges, and to other education institutions.

The General Report includes all results of test items, in depth discussion of issues, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Contract Team. The distribution of this report is limited because of the technical nature of its content.

Additional copies of these reports, in limited numbers, are available from:

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